

TOWN OF STOW
PLANNING BOARD

Minutes of the July 25, 2023, Planning Board Meeting

Planning Board members present: Lori Clark, Karen Kelleher, Margaret Costello, Nancy Arsenault, John Colonna-Romano, Deb Woods (voting associate)

Lori Clark called the meeting to order at 7:00pm.

Approval of Meeting Minutes

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of July 11, 2023, as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; Margaret Costello - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**.

Karen Kelleher motioned to approve the minutes of July 18, 2023, as amended.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; Margaret Costello - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**.

Review of Correspondence

There were no comments made regarding correspondence received.

Public Input

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, shared that the Select Board had an agenda item for a discussion on a policy that would require Town Committees to rotate the position of Chair. She asked the Board if they are considered a committee and added that she believes the Board currently does well selecting their chair. Valerie Oorthuys responded that she believes that the intention, though not yet discussed by the Select Board, is for all boards and committees, but it may not be relevant to elected boards. Lori Clark stated that she would like the Select Board to take public input if it becomes relevant. Dorothy Granat continued by stating that she has had trouble providing public input to the Select Board during their meetings or providing written input before their meetings.

Dorothy Granat, 11 White Pond Road, asked the Board if the Lake Boon Committee presented to the Board. She also asked if the Board will meet with the Lake Boon Committee to address planning recommendations from the State. Karen Kelleher replied that the Comprehensive Plan will address planning recommendations for Lake Boon.

Deb Woods, responded to the earlier comments from Dorothy Granat about commenting at the Select Board meetings and rotating the position of chair on boards and committees. She stated that the public can comment on any of the Select Board's agenda items, but comments will need to occur when the Select Board is discussing the specific item. She continued by stating that the Charter Review Committee considered including the rotation of chair in the Town Charter, but ultimately decided to not include it.

Planning Board Members' Updates

John Colonna-Romano shared that other committees he is part of have had a difficult time selecting a

chair as members typically do not want to hold that position. Karen Kelleher stated that she has seen the Zoning Board of Appeals has had difficulty selecting a chair. She believe that appointing a chair should be left up to the individual board or committee. Lori Clark stated that she hopes that a policy would not force someone into the position of chair. Nancy Arsenault agreed that it should be left to each board or committee to decide. Deb Woods provided additional context to the intention of the proposed change to the Town Charter, stating that position of chair was proposed to have a time limit such as only holding the position for no more than two consecutive terms.

Planning Director's Report

Crescent Street Sidewalk

The Board will be cohosting a public forum with the Complete Streets Committee on August 8, 2023. The forum will discuss the plans for sidewalks along the north side of Crescent Street from Hartley Road to Warren Road.

Kane Land Access Path

Progress has been made for the access path to the Kane Land. The project is anticipated to be completed in the next two weeks; weather delays have extended the project timeline.

Comprehensive Plan Committee

The Comprehensive Plan Committee met on July 24, 2023, for the first time. The meeting introduced members to each other and introduced members to what comprehensive plans are. The chair and clerk of the committee are both at-large members.

Public Hearing

The Cottages at Wandering Pond Active Adult Neighborhood Special Permit, Athens Street

Present: Bruce Wheeler (applicant), George Dimakarakos (applicant's engineer), Sue Carter, (peer reviewer), Thom Miner (landscape architect)

Also Present: Michael Sallese (Police Chief), Kathy Sferra (Conservation Director)

Lori Clark opened the Public Hearing at 7:30pm. She explained the public hearing procedure and invited the applicant or the applicant's designee to present to the Board.

George Dimakarakos presented to the Board on behalf of the applicant. He introduced the project by providing a status update on items that have changed since the last public hearing. These changes include that a parcel was rezoned to be included in the Active Adult Neighborhood Overlay District, and comments from Sue Carter were reflected in the plans submitted on July 7, 2023, and July 24, 2023.

George Dimakarakos shared the revised plan. In the plan, he highlighted the changes that were made. He identified that:

- Duplex units were added to Stepping Stone Lane and Lupine Circle,
- Visitor parking spaces were included at various locations on the plan,
- Adjustments were made for stormwater management by conducting additional soil tests,
- The location of the pickleball courts and the Cottagehouse (name of proposed clubhouse) were switched,
- Additional pervious pavement and reinforced grass parking spaces were added for the Cottagehouse,
- A bus stop was added,

- A revised landscape plan was created,
- A lighting plan was included,
- Responses to comments from Sue Carter were included in a table,
- Architectural plans were reincluded, and
- Wetland crossings have been revised.

He added that the changes were mostly technical.

Lori Clark had the Board and Staff introduce themselves to the applicant and to the public. She opened the discussion to public comment. No initial comments were made by the public.

Lori Clark opened the discussion to the Board for questions and comments.

John Colonna-Romano stated that he observed a note on Sheet 22 of the plan that listed the minimum building separation is 12 feet, but the zoning requirement is 20 feet. He asked where on the plan the buildings will not meet the requirement, how many building will not meet the requirements, and if it is necessary. George Dimakarakos responded by stating that lessened building separation will require approval from the Board. He stated that the reason for the reduced building separation is to increase clustering and open space, and decrease the amount of infrastructure needed. He added that he does not know how many units will be below the requirement but can provide that information later.

John Colonna-Romano asked where windows will be placed, citing privacy as a concern. George Dimakarakos shared that one side of the units will have windows and a sliding door, while the other side will have a reduced number of windows to ensure privacy.

John Colonna-Romano asked if there are tables or chart that shows the distribution of units; he added that there was a distribution table in a previous submission. George Dimakarakos stated that there have been no changes to the distribution of units and the previous table is representative. John Colonna-Romano followed up by asking if there are any estimates on unit price points and affordability. Bruce Wheeler responded that it is too early to identify price points generally. George Dimakarakos added that the diversity of housing options will ideally provide a range of prices.

Nancy Arsenault asked what the distances are between units at The Villages at Stow to help visualize the proposed building separation in the plan. Using the measure tool on Google Maps, George Dimakarakos showed that some of the units are approximately 12 feet from each other; he stated that there is a similar configuration in the plan.

Deb Woods asked if there is an estimated homeowners association fee, and what the fee may include. She added that these fees can prevent people from living in developments due to the additional cost. Bruce Wheeler stated that the fee will be between \$400 and \$500 per month and will include landscaping, snow plowing, water maintenance, and sewer maintenance.

Deb Woods asked if there has been a decision made about an emergency entrance to the development. George Dimakarakos stated that Bruce Wheeler had met with Bose Corporation, adjacent property to the North, about utilizing an existing cart path for emergency access. Bose Corporation was not against the idea, but they did not want to make a definitive answer as they are trying to sell the property. George Dimakarakos indicated that another emergency access route to the property was considered extending from Goshen Lane, but that access would require additional wetland crossing. Deb Woods asked if any

other options were considered. George Dimakarakos stated that there could be an additional access point at the ends of Daisy Lane and Buttercup Lanes, but there were no concerns from the Fire Department regarding the need for additional access based on the road widths and design. Karen Kelleher expressed she is concerned that there is only one entrance for the entire development.

Deb Woods asked what the number of parking spaces are in the plan, not including the spaces in a driveway. George Dimakarakos replied that there are 68 spaces located throughout the plan and 28 spaces located at the Cottagehouse.

Lori Clark asked the Board for their opinions on having only one entrance on the plan. John Colonna-Romano stated that he will defer to the Fire Chief. Nancy Arsenault stated that other developments in town, like Circuit Drive, have one entrance, and that she is unaware of any issues. Karen Kelleher noted that there are other developments have one entrance but are not as densely developed as the plan presented.

John Colonna-Romano asked about the placement of bicycle racks on the site as he noticed that they seemed sporadically placed. Reviewing the revised landscape plans, the location of the bicycle racks could not be identified.

Lori Clark stated that she is not supportive of the stone entry sign that is proposed in the landscaping plan. She states that the sign does not blend in with the existing character of Stow. Nancy Arsenault and Karen Kelleher agreed with Lori Clark. Nancy Arsenault stated that other developments in Town, like Arbor Glenn and Regency at Stow, have hanging signs instead, and that a stone entry sign makes a development feel exclusive.

Michael Sallese asked if the names of the roads have been decided. Bruce Wheeler stated that the names are proposed and not finalized. Michael Sallese stated that he has concerns with the road names as they are similar to existing road names in Town; the similarity can cause confusion when responding to an emergency. Bruce Wheeler followed up and said that he is welcoming to a meeting with Public Safety to identify road names that will need to change.

Lori Clark stated that she is concerned with finding a balance of building separation; she understands that it is encouraged to be dense but fears that it may be too dense.

Lori Clark shared that she is happy to see full cut off lighting proposed. She asked if exterior lighting on the buildings has been considered, citing lighting issues at another Active Adult Neighborhood caused by close building proximity. Bruce Wheeler stated that lighting will be reviewed again in more detail.

Lori Clark thanked the applicant and engineering team for including additional parking locations on the site and for including duplexes throughout the plan.

Nancy Arsenault asked if there is adequate space around the bus stop for parked vehicles; she stated that when children are waiting for the school bus, they often are waiting inside a parked vehicle with a parent. She also asked if a school bus would be able to maneuver the area around the bus stop. Karen Kelleher asked if a school bus would be accessing the bus stop since the roads will be privately owned. Lori Clark supported Nancy Arsenault and added that parents will drive their children to the bus stop, even though it can create unsafe conditions. George Dimakarakos stated he believes that the location of the bus stop will

be suitable for school buses, and that housing options presented may not foster a dense population of families with school age children.

Mark Jones, no address provided, asked if there are going to be any empty conduits on the site that can be used for future utility lines. George Dimakarakos added that there will likely be a few extra conduits, he then deferred to Sue Carter for additional comment. Sue Carter stated that utility companies often require at least one extra conduit for every conduit they use; she added that it may vary based on company and utility line type.

Mark Jones, no address provided, asked if snow storage has been considered as he cannot identify snow storage locations on the plan. George Dimakarakos stated that there are areas that snow can be stored throughout the site. Lori Clark responded that identifying snow storage areas is typically required.

Mark Jones, no address provided, inquired about the governance of the homeowners' association, and asked the board to consider limiting the authority of the association. He suggested that the Board consider removing restrictions on solar panels, parking private vehicles, signs, decorations, clotheslines, and the color of each dwelling. He suggested that there should be clear communication to the Board about transitions within the homeowners' associations. He stated that he supports that there is a limitation on the minimum time a unit can be rented and suggested that the Board further consider the ability of an owner to rent out their unit to discourage corporations from buying units.

Nancy Arsenault asked if the areas marked as pocket open space on the plan will be lawn or left as natural; if a lawn, she asked if there will be an irrigation system. George Dimakarakos stated that the two areas marked as pocket open space will remain natural. He added that the areas between the cottages will be replanted and landscaped to feel like a common. He stated that if an area is landscaped, there will be an irrigation system.

Sue Carter stated that a coworker at her office reviewed the landscape plan and noted that areas where vegetation removed are proposed to be irrigated. Because some of the slopes are steep, it was suggested that permanent irrigation should be avoided on slopes and temporary irrigation should only be used for the establishment of vegetation. She was informed that there may be too much irrigation proposed on the site.

Kathy Sferra informed the Board that the Conservation Commission has not received a Notice of Intent from the applicant. She suggested that the Board keep the hearing open as the Conservation Commission may ask for changes to the plan.

Valerie Oorthuys asked if native plantings and seed mixes that do not require irrigation have been considered. She stated that this will help minimize the amount of permanent irrigation. Thom Miner stated the trees on the site have been selected from the Tree Warden's list of trees, most of which are native. He stated plantings and seed mixes around each unit and common areas will be native or drought resistant species.

Valerie Oorthuys asked the Board if they have any direction for the engineering team regarding an emergency entrance to the site. George Dimakarakos reiterated to the Board that there is a low likelihood of an emergency entrance being used compared to a second entrance and putting in the resources for an emergency only entrance may not be resourceful. Nancy Arsenault asked Michael Sallese for his opinion.

Michael Sallese stated that if an accident were to occur on Athens Street before the street turns north, there would not be a concern from the police as the accident would remain accessible. He supported continuing Athens Street westward to connect to Buttercup Lane and Daisy Lane and noted that there could be an issue accessing the northern section of the development if Wandering Pond Way becomes obstructed.

Lori Clark asked where the cart path is to the Bose Corporation Property. George Dimakarakos displayed the cart path on the plan. Lori Clark asked Valerie Oorthuys to find data on the number of houses per subdivision with one entrance in Stow; she added that this may give the Board a reference point for this project.

Valerie Oorthuys asked the Board if the number of parking spaces on the site is satisfactory. Lori Clark asked what number of spaces serve the northern section of the site versus the southern portion of the site. George Dimakarakos stated that there are 36 additional parking spaces in the northern portion serving about 50 dwellings; 32 additional parking spaces will serve the remaining 90 units. Lori Clark asked the Board for their input. John Colonna-Romano asked if street parking is allowed. Lori Clark answered that street parking is not allowed. George Dimakarakos added that there are 4.5 parking spaces per unit total.

Deb Woods stated that she believes that there are not enough parking spaces, and that people will be parking on the side of the Roads as it will be more convenient than parking in a space and walking. Karen Kelleher agreed with Deb Woods and stated that the 4 parking spaces designated to each unit may be used entirely by the residents of that unit leaving no additional designated parking spaces for guests.

Nancy Arsenault stated that when she visits the Arbor Glenn Neighborhood, residents often have their vehicles parked in their driveway and service providers often park on the street. She continued by stating that this development is like Arbor Glenn and may have future challenges with parking on the street.

Lori Clark stated that she likes the dispersed parking spaces around the site but does not know how to prevent people from parking on the street. Karen Kelleher asked Michael Sallese if vehicles parked on the side of the street may be a public safety concern. Michael Sallese stated that 10 feet is needed between a parked car and a curb for emergency vehicles to get through; if this space is available, there should not be an issue.

Margaret Costello stated that she likes that the additional parking spaces are located throughout the site. However, she stated that she does not think there is an obligation to provide a parking space for every visitor, and that the number of parking spaces should be reduced. She noted that this project should be forward thinking, and that people can be dropped off at a unit or walk from a parking space.

Sue Carter reminded the Board that the site plan is two-dimensional and that some of the proposed roads have steep grades. She noted that the steep grades may discourage people from parking at the Cottagehouse and walking to the northern portion of the development. She suggested to the applicant to review the parking, grades, and development pattern comprehensively.

Margaret Costello asked if on street parking should be a concern of the Board. Lori Clark stated that the roads were designed so that there would be no allowed on street parking. George Dimakarakos replied that parking will be reviewed further by the engineering team.

Valerie Oorthuys asked the Board if there are any comments about the size of the proposed units. Lori Clark stated that she does not have comments about the unit size but would like the duplexes to be designed to look less like two identical units connected to each other. Bruce Wheeler stated that he is considering making the duplex units asymmetrical to make them look like one building and complimentary to the other units on the site.

Margaret Costello stated that there is a market in Stow for older adults looking to downsize, and a 2,400 square foot house with a 1,200 square foot unfinished basement is too large. She believes that about 99 of the units are too large. She added that she supports the clustering of units and would like to see native vegetation planted instead of large grass lawns and a community garden. Bruce Wheeler stated that there is a plan for a community garden, but the location has yet to be determined.

George Dimakarakos stated that he overestimated the number of units that are less than the 20-foot building separation, noting the units on Wandering Pond Way are about 25 feet from each other. Lori Clark asked George Dimakarakos to provide the Board with the frequency of how many units will be less than 20 feet.

Deb Woods stated that she interprets downsizing to be either moving into a unit with a smaller area or moving into a unit that has less maintenance. She stated that she likes the size of the units as they will offer less maintenance but still meeting the size needs of future homeowners. She added that she is hesitant about how close the units are to each other as it is a privacy adjustment for residents of Stow who may move there.

Sue Carter had comments and questions for the Board about their expectations for the amenities around the Cottagehouse. She asked the Board what they expect for the proposed play area, such as a play structure or an open area. She also asked if the size of the proposed pool is large enough; she stated that a pool specialist informed her that the size of the pool is considered a large pool for a single-family residence that may be small for 140 dwelling units.

Karen Kelleher responded that she does not think a play structure needs to be built, and that one could be added in the future by the homeowners' association. Margaret Costello and Lori Clark agreed with Karen Kelleher.

The Board did not have any comments about the size of the proposed pool.

Sue Carter stated that a dog park and dog related rules have been incorporated into other similar developments. She asked the Board if there are any rules about dogs that they are considering. The Board did not have any specific rules about dogs that they would like to see included. Karen Kelleher suggested that dog related rules should be left to the homeowners' association.

Sue Carter asked if the Board is satisfied with the number of parking spaces at the Cottagehouse, particularly regarding the proposed bus stop. She noted that there may be a lot of activity in that area of the development. Lori Clark stated that she is hesitant to add more parking to that area. Nancy Arseneault asked what the occupancy level of the Cottagehouse is. Bruce Wheeler and George Dimakarakos did not know the occupancy, but state that they can provide that to the Board.

Sue Carter stated that the parking areas may need more lighting as they may not receive enough lighting from the proposed post lights and exterior lighting from each unit.

Sue Carter expressed concern about the proposed phasing plan regarding the settling basins. Because of the steep terrain and the large amounts of recent rainfall, she noted that there will need to be sufficient space to handle stormwater during construction. She informed the Board that a technical review will be conducted.

Valerie Oorthuys asked the applicant to describe any potential streetscape improvements along Hudson Road and Edson Road. George Dimakarakos stated that there will be sidewalk from Athens Street will turn South and be along the west side of Hudson Road. A crosswalk will cross over Hudson Road and will allow pedestrian to walk along Edson Street. John Colonna-Romano asked if the placement of the crosswalk relative to the grade of Athens Street will create a safety concern. George Dimakarakos stated that the grade of Athens Street will be about 3.25% and will likely not create a safety hazard.

Karen Kelleher motioned to continue the Public Hearing to September 26, 2023 at 7:30 pm.

Margaret Costello seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; Margaret Costello - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**.

Special Town Meeting Warrant Articles

Valerie Oorthuys stated that additional funding may be requested at Special Town Meeting for the Town Center Streetscape Concept Plans. She informed the Board that the prices for consulting services have not yet been reviewed by the selection committee. Lori Clark asked what amount should be listed on the warrant if the cost is not yet known. Valerie Oorthuys suggested that the Board vote on a maximum amount of money to ask for at Special Town Meeting. John Colonna-Romano asked if there is any estimate as to how much more funding will be needed. Valerie Oorthuys stated that she is not sure, but the cost could be up to \$100,000 more.

Karen Kelleher motioned to authorize Valerie Oorthuys to submit a Special Town Meeting Warrant Article, if necessary, not to exceed \$100,000.00 for the Town Center Streetscape Concept Plans.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; Margaret Costello - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**.

Common Road Discussion

Lori Clark introduced the Common Road discussion to the Board. She indicated that the intent of the discussion is for the Board to vote on sending a memorandum to the Select Board about receiving public input and engineers' input before deciding to make Common Road a one-way road. Nancy Arsenault asked if input from abutters, specially First Parish Church, should be included in the memorandum.

Lori Clark invited Michael Sallese to comment. Michael Sallese stated that there will be no decision without public input. He indicated that Common Road has been a public safety concern. He also clarified that, from his perspective, the entirety of Common Road will not be a one-way road, rather just a one-way from the western driveway entrance of the Church to Library Hill Road. Michael Sallese stated that there has been correspondence with the Church, and that Common Road and the Library renovation are becoming connected. He reiterated that the public will be aware and involved in the decision.

Nancy Arsenault asked if the memorandum will address the Town Center Streetscape Concept Plans project and the encroachment into the Town Common. Karen Kelleher stated that it will address the entirety of the modification.

Karen Kelleher expressed concern about vehicles turning left from Great Road onto Common Road regarding the impact to traffic. Karen Kelleher asked Michael Sallese if he believes that a one-way road will slow vehicle traffic. Michael Sallese stated that vehicles turn left onto Common Road from Great Road already but understood that this number will increase. He is unsure if the proposed one-way will slow vehicles, but he believes that it will improve safety of the intersections nearby. Karen Kelleher asked how vehicles will be prevented from turning onto Common Road from Library Hill Road. Michael Sallese answered that signing and police patrolling will prevent vehicles from going the wrong way.

Valerie Oorthuys reminded the Board that the Select Board has not had the opportunity to discuss Common Road. She stated that she will draft a memorandum for the Board to review at the next meeting that will state that the Board would like an engineer to state that a one way is an appropriate solution for the known problem. Lori Clark asked if it would be appropriate to send the Library Committee the memorandum. Karen Kelleher stated that she believes it is appropriate since the design of the Library is dependent on Common Road being a one-way.

Adjournment

Margaret Costello motioned to adjourn.

John Colonna-Romano seconded.

Roll Call Vote: Lori Clark - **Yea**; Karen Kelleher - **Yea**; Nancy Arsenault - **Yea**; Margaret Costello - **Yea**; John Colonna-Romano - **Yea**.

Respectfully Submitted,
Michael Slagle